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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO STUDY, MITIGATE AND MINIMIZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISASTER AT CHERNOBYL

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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO STUDY, MITIGATE AND MINIMIZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISASTER AT CHERNOBYL

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 45/190 of 21 December 1990 on international cooperation to address and mitigate the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. It brings up to date the information reported to the Economic and Social Council in the Secretary-General's report of 6 June 1991 (A/46/215-E/1991/76).

II. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

A. The accident

2. On 26 April 1986, an explosion occurred at the Chernobyl nuclear plant, some 50 kilometres north-west of the Ukrainian capital Kiev, which destroyed the core of the unit 4 reactor, resulting in the release of radioactive substances into the environment. Many people died as a direct result of the accident, and many more are reported to have died as a result of containing it and because of their involvement in clean-up operations. The full impact of the accident on the health of the affected population will not be fully known for years to come. As a further consequence, some 131,000 square kilometres of Belarus, Ukraine and the Russian Federation became contaminated by radioactivity in varying degrees. The lives of the inhabitants of the affected regions were severely disrupted, work at a number of industrial enterprises was halted, and large areas of agricultural and forest land were put out of use.

B. Measures undertaken by the Soviet authorities

3. A Government Commission, headed by the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and including experts in nuclear physics, power engineering, health care, biology, environmental protection, as well as representatives of the Governments of the USSR and the three affected republics, was established to coordinate efforts aimed at alleviating the consequences of the accident. A number of important measures have been undertaken, including early assessment of the extent of damage and radiation; control of further emissions from the damaged reactor; identification of contaminated areas and evacuation of inhabitants and farm animals from a 30-kilometre zone; encasement of the destroyed power unit; decontamination of settlements; construction of housing units for resettled persons; organization of extensive medical examinations; and dosimetric surveillance of human populations and farm animals. Since the accident, over a million people have undergone medical check-ups relating to radiation exposure.

4. Three individual programmes - by Belarus and the Russian SFSR from 1990 to 1995, and Ukraine for 1990-2000 - were adopted. Despite these significant efforts, however, it became increasingly clear that the dimension and complexity of the problem were far greater than originally estimated, and that in many respects it was difficult to reach an assessment complete enough to ensure the safety of the people already affected or likely to be affected in the future.

5. This realization led, ultimately, to the adoption of a programme containing urgent measures designed to overcome the consequences of the accident, prepared by the All-Union Government and the Governments of the affected republics and endorsed by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in April 1990. To coordinate these efforts, a central USSR Committee on the Elimination of the Consequences of the Chernobyl Accident was set up, together with corresponding republican committees, all charged with organizing and pursuing activities to address the wide range of problems stemming from the accident.

6. In addition, a "Concept for Safe Living" was adopted, proposing practical measures for minimizing the effects of the accident. Under this programme, 87,900 people were resettled in 1990, and 119,000 are expected to be resettled in 1991. It is envisaged that by the end of 1992, a total of 218,000 persons will have been moved to clean areas, and that some 4 million square metres of housing and other facilities will have been constructed, with adequate employment opportunities offered in resettlement zones. Since 1986, the Governments of the USSR and the three affected republics have spent more than R 25 billion on such relief and reconstruction programmes.

7. International, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as institutions from the private sector, and individuals - have begun to play a significant role in assisting with the implementation of the programme.

III. INVOLVEMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

8. A number of organizations of the United Nations system began cooperating at an early stage and, in April 1990, the Governments of the USSR, Belarus and Ukraine requested the inclusion of an item on international cooperation in relation to the Chernobyl accident in the agenda of the first regular session in 1990 of the Economic and Social Council. As a result, in May 1990, Chernobyl was a major topic of discussion at the meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and, in July 1990, the subject of Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/50. Thereafter, the Secretary-General requested the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) to prepare a report on the activities of the United Nations system in relation to the consequences of the accident, to assist the Economic and Social Council in its deliberations on this item at its second session in the summer of 1990.

9. The Secretary-General launched a fact-finding mission to the affected areas in September 1990, headed by the Executive Secretary of ECE and comprising representatives of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development of the Secretariat. Its findings provided the basis of the Secretary-General's report to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly (A/45/643), which dealt with the activities already under way or planned by the organizations of the United Nations system, notably the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organization, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Several of these organizations are members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Response to Nuclear Accidents, which was set up shortly after the Chernobyl accident.

IV. GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 45/190 AND RELATED ACTIONS

10. After considering that report, the General Assembly, taking into account the activities by the United Nations system, and recognizing the importance of the ongoing assessment of the radiological consequences of the accident coordinated by IAEA (the results of which were published in May 1991), adopted resolution 45/190, by which the Secretary-General was invited to formulate a programme for coordinating the activities of the organizations of the United Nations system involved in efforts to address and mitigate the consequences of the accident; entrust one of the Under-Secretaries-General with the task of coordination; establish a task force responsible for stimulating and monitoring activities of the United Nations system; and launch an appeal for voluntary contributions from Member States in support of a programme to mitigate the consequences of the accident.

11. By his letter of 11 March 1991, the Secretary-General informed the heads of organizations and agencies of the United Nations system that he had appointed the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna as United Nations Coordinator for international cooperation to the areas affected

by the Chernobyl accident, and requested their fullest support and cooperation. At the same time, the Secretary-General addressed Governments of Member States reiterating the General Assembly's urgent appeal to the international community, and requesting generous contributions.

V. ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS COORDINATOR

Preparation of work

12. Simultaneously, and with the help of the IAEA, UNEP/UNSCEAR and DTCD, the United Nations Coordinator established a small core secretariat in her office at Vienna. She held numerous and extensive discussions with the Soviet authorities both in Moscow and in the affected republics, and with their representatives in Vienna and New York, and submitted an outline of a concerted plan of assistance requirements to them for guidance.

13. In these discussions, the United Nations Coordinator stressed that the responsibility for formulation of the assistance needed rested with the requesting parties and that the thrust of the assistance being sought should be on the economic and social consequences of the accident, in addition to urgent humanitarian needs. A first list of requirements was submitted to the Coordinator by the Governments concerned on 18 March.

14. On 10 April, the United Nations Coordinator dispatched a staff member to Moscow, Kiev and Minsk to cooperate with the All-Union Chernobyl Committee and the Committees of the three affected republics in the further elaboration of the concerted plan of assistance requirements, henceforth referred to as the "Joint Plan". The approach taken was that, following a general description of the problems resulting from the accident, prioritized requirements for assistance should be presented by sector in the form of concrete project proposals, for which a standard format had been designed.

15. It was understood by all parties that the result of this exercise would serve as the basic document for a donors' meeting, or pledging conference, which was considered to be the most appropriate platform for launching the international effort to help normalize the living conditions of the people affected by the accident.

Inter-Agency Task Force

16. Following upon the Secretary-General's letter of 11 March, the United Nations Coordinator wrote on 19 March to heads of agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, informing them of the Secretary-General's intention to establish an inter-agency task force responsible for stimulating and monitoring activities of the United Nations system in relation to the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident, in accordance with paragraph 1 (c) of General Assembly resolution 45/190. The Task Force was formally set up at the meeting of ACC held in Paris from 17 to 19 April at which the United Nations Coordinator presented her progress report.

17. The Task Force was established at a high level to reflect the magnitude of the problem and the wide-ranging and unprecedented scope and nature of assistance required, and to ensure rapid decisions on policy and substantive questions. It comprises representatives of those agencies and organizations which, by virtue of their mandates, can provide direct and relevant assistance and advice, particularly in the critical sectors of health, agriculture, environmental protection, energy planning, resettlement, education and public information, industry and infrastructure, and nuclear safety. The membership includes the Centre for Human Rights, ECE, FAO, IAEA, ILO, UNCHS (Habitat), UNICEF, UNDTCD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNFPA, WHO AND WMO.

18. The Task Force is now closely involved in all aspects of the international assistance effort. Individual project proposals received from the Soviet authorities were forwarded to each organization in accordance with its mandate, for technical comments and views as to their feasibility for execution.

19. So far, the Task Force has met three times, on 24 May at Vienna (coinciding with the presence of representatives of the four Chernobyl committees); on 15 July at Geneva (in connection with the meeting of the Economic and Social Council at which the Coordinator presented the Secretary-General's report on the Chernobyl item); and on 19 September in New York (on the eve of the Chernobyl Pledging Conference).

United Nations Coordinator's mission to the USSR and affected republics

20. At the invitation of the governments concerned, the United Nations Coordinator visited the USSR and the three republics affected by the Chernobyl accident, from 23 to 29 April 1991, accompanied by staff of her secretariat, and one representative each of ECE and UNDP, as well as the Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Moscow.

21. The main purpose was to reach agreement with the government authorities, as well as with the Chairmen and senior staff of all four Chernobyl committees on urgent action required to finalize the Joint Plan. The timing of the visit also enabled the United Nations Coordinator to represent the Secretary-General on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the accident: on 26 April she delivered a message and appeal at a memorial concert at Minsk, before a live audience and with wide television coverage, both within the Soviet Union, and in parts of Europe and Latin America.

22. The mission entailed intensive discussions at the highest levels of government as well as technical meetings with the four Chernobyl committees. It also included visits to the damaged reactor and to other heavily contaminated areas, as well as to a "resettled" village, and several hospitals.

23. The visit pointed up in stark terms the many scientific uncertainties still surrounding the Chernobyl question, compounded by the difficult situation with regard to the state of the economy and other local factors. It also brought acutely to the fore the grievous situation in which the many

victims of the accident continue to find themselves, and the severe stress and anxiety to which they are constantly subjected, for health reasons and other less tangible, but equally significant, factors.

24. All the concerned authorities agreed to the concept of a Joint Plan of action in which the requirements for assistance of all the republics affected would be given due consideration. It was also agreed that the views of non-governmental organizations and of the affected communities should be taken into account.

The Joint Plan

25. A revised version of the document containing the requirements for assistance was received at Vienna on 6 May, the deadline agreed during the visit. It was reviewed and finalized by a working group convened at Vienna on 21 May, comprising staff of the core secretariat for Chernobyl, two outside consultants, as well as five representatives from the USSR and the affected republics. The document was discussed by the Inter-Agency Task Force at its meeting at Vienna on 24 May, and the comments received from the relevant organizations of the United Nations system were incorporated. It was also reviewed once more at the Inter-Agency Task Force meeting of 15 July at Geneva.

26. The document is entitled "Chernobyl: International Cooperation to Alleviate the Effects of the Accident at the Nuclear Power Plant (Phase I) - A Joint Plan of the Governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic". It contains an address by the heads of the four Governments involved, a description of the background of the problem, summaries of requirements as well as individual project proposals.

27. The Joint Plan now covers 131 project proposals which call for outside funding in the amount of $US 646,480,000. In addition, the Governments concerned will make considerable counterpart contributions and investments in each case. The projects are grouped in seven sectors: health, resettlement, economic rehabilitation, socio-psychological rehabilitation, food and agriculture, environmental monitoring and clean-up, and lessons from the Chernobyl experience. A break-down by sectors and geographical distribution is attached to the report.

28. In order to reflect the coordinated approach pursued by the United Nations system agencies in their Chernobyl-related activities, the Governments' Joint Plan is complemented with two further parts, one covering special Chernobyl programmes of UNESCO and WHO (prepared prior to the appointment of the United Nations Coordinator), and another summarizing all the relevant activities of the United Nations system organizations.

29. All three parts have been assembled in a single document entitled "Chernobyl Pledging Conference" which was sent, at the end of July, to all States Members of the United Nations and observers, so as to enable them to

prepare their positions and identify possible areas in which they could offer cooperation at the Pledging Conference.

30. The Joint Plan is intended to provide a framework for the provision of assistance of all kinds and from all possible sources: governmental, non-governmental, private sector, foundations, academic institutions, communities and individuals. Its purpose is to facilitate a coordinated approach so as to ensure to the maximum possible extent that contributions are directed to priority areas and that there is no duplication.

31. To encourage the widest possible provision of assistance, maximum flexibility is envisaged as regards channels of funding. Thus, interested donors have many alternatives for making their assistance available, for instance:

(a) Cash contributions made directly to the United Nations Chernobyl Trust Fund. These funds will be used to implement specific projects through United Nations system organizations as executing agencies;

(b) Contributions in cash or in kind made on a multilateral basis through the relevant United Nations system organizations which would function as executing agencies;

(c) Contributions made on a bilateral basis by donors directly to the recipient party (ministries, non-governmental organizations, communities, etc.).

VI. CHERNOBYL PLEDGING CONFERENCE

32. The Pledging Conference took place on 20 September 1991 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. It was chaired by the Secretary-General and, upon his departure, by the United Nations Coordinator. The affected communities were represented at very senior levels - the USSR and Ukraine by their respective Foreign Ministers, the Republic of Belarus by the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and the Russian Federation by the Special Adviser to the President.

33. In addition to the statements presented on behalf of the Governments concerned, representatives of 31 Governments made interventions conveying concern, describing their own involvement in assistance activities, and indicating full recognition of the need for further action. Of these, the following Governments made pledges to contribute to the United Nations Trust Fund for Chernobyl or bilaterally, or to make contributions in kind: Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Holy See, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Liechtenstein, Malta, Norway, Oman, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, USSR, United Arab Emirates. Several other countries announced that the matter is still under review within their respective Governments. It should be noted that prior to the Pledging Conference, the Governments of the United Kingdom and Greece had already

deposited funds into the United Nations Trust Fund for Chernobyl. The total received and pledged to date amounts to approximately $US 8 million in convertible currency, the equivalent of $3.4 million in non-convertible currency, together with a significant amount of in-kind assistance.

34. The representatives of six United Nations system organizations and two non-governmental organizations also took the floor and promised continued support and cooperation. The representative of one intergovernmental organization, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, indicated the Bank's interest in providing catalytic investment loans as well as expertise in financial and economic management, and in launching technical project preparation missions.

VII. FUTURE WORK

35. At the Conference, numerous delegates commended the Secretary-General and the United Nations Coordinator for their efforts in mobilizing and coordinating international cooperation for Chernobyl and they emphasized that those activities should continue.

36. The presentation of the Joint Plan and the Pledging Conference were not ends in themselves but important milestones in a continuing process. Their ultimate impact will depend on solid work of follow-up by the United Nations Secretariat, including, inter alia:

(a) Collection of funds pledged;

(b) Management of the United Nations Trust Fund for Chernobyl, including disbursement of funds according to criteria to be established, and monitoring their use;

(c) Coordination of the activities of the United Nations system of agencies and organizations through the Inter-Agency Task Force;

(d) Liaison with the coordinating mechanisms put in place by the national authorities in the USSR and affected republics;

(e) Monitoring of assistance provided bilaterally in the context of the Joint Plan in response to the Secretary-General's appeal;

(f) Revision and adjustment of the Joint Plan, in consultation with the national authorities;

(g) Continuation of efforts to mobilize support from the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and other entities;

(h) Establishment and maintenance of a data bank on ongoing and planned bilateral and multilateral assistance;

(i) Dissemination of information;

(j) Periodic reporting on progress to the General Assembly.

37. In this connection, it must be noted that the United Nations Coordinator's small core secretariat has been organized for an initial period of operation of seven months, which came to an end on 30 September. Its considerable work has so far been accomplished by redeployment of existing resources from the regular budget, as well as recourse to extrabudgetary sources. If it is the General Assembly's view that the work of the United Nations Coordinator of International Cooperation for Chernobyl should go on - a point which is clearly supported by the outcome of the Pledging Conference - then appropriate resources for a core secretariat will have to be provided. The minimum requirement would be the provision of the services of two professional and two general service staff, in addition to general operating costs (travel, translations, printing, etc.)

VIII. CONCLUSION

38. The accident at the Chernobyl nuclear plant is unique in that, despite five years which have passed, its consequences are still not clear and will not be fully known for many years to come. The accident has, moreover, an international dimension not only because its insidious effects have transcended national boundaries, but also because there are important lessons to be learned from its aftermath by countries throughout the world.

39. It therefore follows that actions undertaken in response to General Assembly resolution 45/190 constitute only the beginning of what must be a continuing and constantly evolving process. The decision adopted by ECE in April 1991, which endorses the basic tenets of the General Assembly resolution as well as the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 26 July 1991 (resolution 1991/51) are important steps in this regard. However, the extent to which effective international assistance of the magnitude required can be mobilized will depend upon the willingness of Member States to follow up the urgent appeal which they themselves made unanimously through General Assembly resolution 45/190 "... to all States members of the international community, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the business community, scientific bodies and individuals to continue to provide all appropriate support and assistance to the areas most affected by the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, in full coordination and cooperation with envisaged or planned efforts of the United Nations system."

ANNEX

Joint plan for Chernobyl

Summary of assistance requirements

Sector	All-Union (USSR)	Belarus	Ukraine	Russian Federation	Three republics	Total
A. Health (22 projects)	23 023 000 (11)	2 147 000 (4)	4 651 000 (5)	3 300 000 (2)	-	33 121 000 (22) 5%
B. Resettlement (18 projects)	96 000 (1)	10 100 000 (5)	7 500 000 (2)	25 000 000 (3)	144 600 000 (7)	187 296 000 (18) 29%
C. Economic rehabilitation (12 projects)	9 725 000 (4)	-	4 100 000 (1)	620 000 (2)	36 060 000 (5)	50 505 000 (12) 8%
D. Socio-psychological rehabilitation (24 projects)	19 110 000 (8)	21 205 000 (3)	25 000 (1)	-	56 251 000 (12)	96 591 000 (24) 15%
E. Food and agriculture (24 projects)	13 300 000 (5)	4 700 000 (2)	8 930 000 (6)	15 330 000 (2)	168 400 000 (9)	210 660 000 (24) 32.6%
F. Environmental monitoring and clean-up (25 projects)	34 635 000 (11)	3 902 000 (6)	5 600 000 (2)	450 000 (2)	13 100 000 (4)	57 187 000 (25) 8.8%
G. Lessons from the Chernobyl experience (6 projects)	6 620 000 (5)	3 500 000 (1)	-	-	-	10 120 000 (6) 1.6%
Total (131 projects)	106 509 000 (45) 16.5%	45 554 000 (21) 7%	30 806 000 (17) 4.8%	44 700 000 (11) 6.9%	419 411 000 (37) 64.8%	646 480 000 (131) 100%